LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 1831
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

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By JOSEPH McCABE

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By Joseph McCabe

I make no apology for saying Russia instead of the U.S.S.R. Everything that I give in this essay refers to that particular Soviet Republic which we call Russia, and I do not need the pedantry of saying U.S.S.R. every time, as enthusiasts so often insist, to prove that I have made a study of the subject. Let it be understood at once that I have never yet been in Russia, the war which broke out in 1939 and the crisis having frustrated my plans, and I do not read Russian. I have, in fact, the eccentric idea that the man who reads 50 books about the Russian people may be much better informed about it than the man who has visited the country. It is amazing how dozens of writers on Russia who have visited it—for three weeks or three months, and often even longer—seem from their works never to have discovered that it has a sex life. Many, after repeated visits or spending a year living amongst and conversing with the people, assure us that, while the population of Russia seems to increase at a remarkable pace and its physiologists have not yet discovered how to attain such increase without sexual commerce, Russian men and women are more indifferent to the sex life than any others in Europe!

The reader will understand, then, that what I here say is an attempt to ascertain

the truth by comparing the statements of 30 or 40 recent writers—pro-Russian, anti-Russian, and plain observers of life—in addition to those I have quoted in my "Life of Stalin" (published by Haldeman-Julius, 75c), and various chapters on Russian affairs. And the most distinct, most confident, and perhaps most important conclusion or impression from it all is that there is surprisingly little impeachment of the Russian character on sexual grounds. If one goes back to the wild literature of the decade that followed the establishment of the power of the Bolsheviks one can, of course, gather some quite tropical flowers of description. All religion having been trampled into the dust except for the heroic minority that braved the terrors of the atheist Inquisition, one hardly needed evidence of the awful demoralization. At one time a story went the round of the press that even girls and women were nationalized and made common servants of the brutal lust of men. It was little use in those days to say that in fact Lenin had at once declared, "The inequality of woman must go," and the new administration had granted her social and legal equality with man and pressed her everywhere to put herself in a position of economic independence. From the suites of the Commissars of the People, whom novelists depicted bathing in champagne and collecting harems of stenographers—largely tender religious virgins whom they raped—to the workshops and

villages, orgy was the order of the day. We shall see what little disorder there actually was in the early years of confusion.

The truth slowly broke through the clouds of poison-gas and from about 1930 we got a new literature about Russia; with the occasional lurid appearance of some book by an "escaped" White Russian whose fiction the press deeply appreciated. It is to this period (1930-40) that I have chiefly directed my inquiry. After 1940, the flames of the European war began to have a broken reflection in Russia; from 1942 onward no one looks for normal social conditions, though in point of fact there seems to have been less demoralization in the post-war years than in most other countries. However that may be, it is witnesses to life in the settled 30's, especially the later part of the decade, that are most valuable, and their evidence is fairly consistent. Even the hostile writers do not retail stories about morals like those of the early years. It is the political "tyranny" that makes them foam at the mouth, while a score of other witnesses, even when not Communists, report the people as not merely content with but as a whole enthusiastic for their political regime and their leader. With that point I am not here concerned. I take the question whether there is in Russia more or less sexual freedom, or whether the average behavior in sex relations is much the same as in America or Britain.

In judging the evidence we naturally keep in mind two general considerations. The first is that the question of sex life in Russia has obviously an important relation to the question of the influence of religion on conduct. I have not space here to enlarge on the controversy about the remaining influence of the church there. I have dealt with it elsewhere and shown that religious authorities, even Catholic, generally agreed with the estimate of the leader of the Militant Atheists, Yaroslavski, that when the population was 160,000,000 (in the 30's) about 100,000,000 had gone over to Atheism and the remainder clung to the old creeds (with small exceptions, the Greek Orthodox Church). This is a far higher proportion of churchgoers than in Britain, France, or America, yet Russia is rightly called an atheistic and materialistic state because its rulers, whether you mean the actual administration or the Communist Party which really controls the whole, are all Atheists. It should be interesting even to Freethinkers to see what difference if any in sex conduct has followed the rejection of clerical dictation by the majority of a great nation.

It ought to be still more interesting to the religious person who invariably supposes that the first fruit of Atheism in a body of people is "promiscuity." You would think that it would occur to the religious American to wonder why, in the red-hot campaign of the last two years to convince him

of the sins of the Russians, he has heard so little about an epidemic of immorality. It was an essential part of the policy of those who were trying to reconcile the American people to the plot to bomb Russia to use everywhere the phrase "Atheistic Communism." The reader who might chickenheartedly hesitate to agree to blasting the life out of 10,000,000 or so Russian men, women, and children because they were Communists—and these same war-mongers commonly say that it is only a small minority of them that are Communists—might be induced to fight when you add that they are Atheists. Yet in all the acres of vilification of Russia that we read the only suggestion of the evil fruits of their Atheism is that they reject Freedom and Democracy. The truth is obvious. The experience of Russia has belied the musty old claim that ceasing to believe in God is followed by rapid moral deterioration; and since the sexual clauses of the Decalogue are specifically Christian, the defiance of these ought to be the first and more conspicuous result. Instead of this we shall find even Christian prelates and devout Quakers, well acquainted with the Russian people, declaring that they are much less sexy than Americans or Britons.

The second angle of particular interest from which you must view this question of sex life is to compare present-day with Tsarist Russia. The student of sexology

who expects to find, apart from the relation to Atheism and religion or any comparison with earlier times, that there is something original or characteristic in the sex-expression of the Slav will be disappointed. The best foreign observers, men who have spent a year or two in Russia, find so little that is peculiar to Russia—most of them in fact insist that the Russians are the more puritanical—that they just say that there is in regard to sex no or little difference, and if anything it makes the Russian less sexy, between Russian and American or British behavior. But the reader who is intrigued by the relation of sex conduct to beliefs or the loss of them will find it of immense interest to study the extraordinary freedom of sex expression in Tsarist days and the considerable reduction at least of that freedom since the Revolution, so I give a few facts about it.

SEX IN TSARIST RUSSIA

There is a general agreement that average character in all classes was low in Tsarist days and is much higher today. We do not turn to novels for facts but they do reflect fairly faithfully the general standards of social behavior, and everybody knows that in the last century Russia had a remarkable series of realistic story-tellers. All the principal novels have been translated into English, and a large part of my readers will have seen at least some of them.

From first to last they describe a poor type of middle-class character, while Tolstoi gives us lurid pictures of the life of the rich and Gorki describes the life of the poor. The latest book in English on Dostoievsky, the greatest of the novelists, has the title "The Breath of Corruption." Dostoievsky himself, always lenient and charitable, compared the Russian character to soft wax on which no definite stamp had been impressed by either state (which was completely indifferent about it) or church (which almost confines itself to supplying a vast crowd of priests, who were notorious for drinking, to mumble services on Sundays). The great scandal of the monk-adventurer Rasputin, who had extraordinary influence at the court by mixing religion and vice, showed us that this state of things lasted right up to the eve of the Revolution.

Several professors who discussed the subject confirm this. Dr. Dillon, who taught for many years in a Tsarist university, published in 1892 a work (anonymous) with the title "Russian Characteristics." As I summed up his book in 1914, he represented the Russians as "very drunken, very untruthful, very dishonest, very immoral, and very thriftless, shiftless, gross, and unenterprising." The most distinguished Russian sociologist, Professor Milyukov, writing on the subject ("Russia and its Crisis") in 1905, quoted Dostoievky's description and said

that "the general impression he gives is not far from true." Being a Liberal leader, he was not prepared to use such drastic language as Dillon and he preferred to describe his people as "morally lenient." I knew Milyukov well after 1917, and in conversation he admitted that the summary of general Russian character I extracted from the novels of Pushkin, Dostoievsky, Turgeniev, Gorki and Tolstoi was correct. The general standards of behavior were low, and in such circumstances one does not look for ascetic ideas about sex.

The reality was far worse than what anybody would expect. It is another illustration of the artificiality of this loud claim that religious belief inspires conduct, that while American and British apologists were arguing thus against Freethinkers no one on either side made a sensible inquiry into the state of morals in countries, such as Russia, the Balkans, Italy, Spain, or Latin America, where the highest percentage of the people were still religious. Even granting that few of the underground rebels were religious we may safely say that there were nothing like 1,000,000 Atheists in Russia in 100,000,000 people. Yet sex indulgence in the larger cities assumed forms that are repulsive even to advocates of "free love" today. My readers are familiar with pictures of blended piety and license in the Middle Ages, but in many respects the Russian situation was worse than any that I know.

Histories of prostitution are considered wicked books today. I cannot lay my hands on an American work that goes sufficiently into detail, and there is none published in England in recent years. A good German history is that of Wilhelm Sorge who quotes sordid details from other authorities who traveled in Russia in the last century, and in fact had himself a considerable knowledge of Leningrad and Moscow. He premises that in Tsarist Russia the man married on the average five years earlier than the average in other European countries, and this ought to reduce the number of prostitutes, yet they were as numerous as in other cities with the largest number of such women. Some authorities estimated that there were 26,000 in Moscow, to little over a million people. It is even estimated that there were 38,000, from 15 upwards at St. Petersburg in 1870. One quarter of Moscow was entirely occupied by them and they were numerous even in the most respectable districts. Their trade was, as elsewhere, organized, and they were greatly exploited. But the feature that made Russia worst in respect of this social evil was the youth of the girls. Sorge says that the majority ranged from 15 to 18, but Notzel, one of the best authorities who speaks from personal observation, shows that there was an appalling traffic in girls of 12 to 14 in Tsarist days.

This was not a secret evil of which the

majority of the Russian people and the authorities might be presumed to be ignorant. It was familiar to everybody because these pitiful children haunted the entrances to the public baths, even the more expensive. Hot baths in a foam of lather have always been popular in the Russian cities, and there were a larger number of institutions, of all prices, for the purpose. Most of these had a unique installation, the Family Bath: a room or double room with a dressing room and large bath. The normal function was to accommodate a whole family on bathing night, but a man was not obliged to produce their birth certificates if he turned up with two girls in their early teens whom he described as his daughters; though he might be encouraged to enter the building by the rear door. One large institution in an elegant quarter notoriously let in numbers of girls of, Notzel says, 11 to 13 by its rear door, and they were at the service of bathers. The girls hung about the doors of such establishments and pestered visitors to take them in as their children. Notzel tells us that on one occasion when a girl of 15 solicited him, a girl of 9 who stood by broke in by saying to the older girl: "You surely don't want to go with an old thing like that." They were at the doors of these establishments at 10 in the morning and were often there when the place closed at midnight. From 4 to 7 especially—the "jaded businessman"—they were busy, and as the establishments were often on the

more frequented boulevards or in connection with all-known cafes, practically everybody knew about them. The police did not interfere. They were too busy at the instigation of the Holy Synod searching out heretics and rebels.

It may be thought that these scenes were peculiar to St. Petersburg (the old name of Leningrad) and, as it grew and took over the place of chief city, Moscow. But there was another Russian institution in Tsarist days which showed the same attitude in men from all parts of Russia (in Asia as well as Europe). This was the annual fair at Nijni Novgorod on the Volga, in the center of the country. It was an old trade-fair which had become the most famous of its kind in Europe. Held from July 25th to September 12th, it drew merchants from the remotest parts of the Empire. It was a town in itself. In the center was a great Hostel for Strangers, accommodating several thousand, and there were about 4,000 other permanent buildings. Most writers say that 200,000 used to visit the fair every year; one writer says 400,000.

But until the latter part of the last century it was as notorious for its gaiety and its orgies as for the volume of its trade. Unfortunately detailed descriptions are rare. The best description is Mme B. Eltzive's "Sur la foire de Nijni Novgorod" (1894) and Ramon J. Sender's "Carta de Moscu sobre al amor" (1934—in Spanish). The British

National Library has neither—unless its prudes keep them in what they call "the Cupboard" and refuse to catalogue them—nor Louis Fiaux's "La prostitution en Russie," which gives much interesting detail. I doubt if they will be available except in private libraries in America. I can say only that prostitutes of all ages flocked to the great fair as they did in the Middle Ages to a city in which a general Church Council or an important state ceremony was to be held. From late afternoon until late into the night the flow of drink and indulgence in sex were orgiastic. The importance is that here were representatives of the entire Russian people, from the German frontier to Siberia.

Another method of ascertaining sex life in Tsarist days would be to examine the illegitimate birth rate, but here again it is difficult to give reliable figures. Webb's standard "Dictionary of Statistics" gives the figures for a score of countries, but not Russia. The Encyclopedia Americana gives a list of cities (with no date or authority) in which Moscow is third from the top. But all such figures are misleading. Local attitudes to illegitimate babies varied so much in the last century that the figures are unsafe as a general test, and in some countries marriage of the parents after the birth of a child made it legitimate. The only consistent feature is that Catholic (Greek and Roman) states and provinces were almost always the worst.

In a loosely-administered country like Russia statistics would, in any case, be useless, but the general conditions were such that the proportion of bastards must have been high. Professor Dillon tells us of a large country district in the early years of this century where only $150 a year was spent on education, while there were 700 drinking places in the district with a trade of 2,000,000 rubles a year. As the popes (priests) shared the drinking and other habits of the people, an irregular birth here and there would not trouble them. Mrs. Timbres, an excellent witness of whose book I will speak presently, tells how (about 1936, apparently) she asked her servant, a church-member, whether she went to mass always when her free day fell on a Sunday. "No," said the woman, "sometimes there is no service, as the priest is drunk half the time." A few censorious visitors have thought it worth while to tell us that they saw a drunken man once or twice in Soviet Russia. Certainly there is still some drunkenness—I will return to the point—but we have just as many assurances that many of the popes still drink heavily.

We must remember the housing conditions in Tsarist days. They are still notoriously unsatisfactory—where are they not? —and apologists rightly make the point that the population of cities has doubled in the last 30 years while the national resources have been so strained. But most writers

miss the point or are unaware that in Tsarist Russia the housing of great masses of the urban workers was abominable and not conducive to sexual restraint. In barrack-like buildings men and women lay promiscucusly in the straw on the floors. There was no furniture, no beds, and the sanitation arrangements were—if there were any —appalling.

In fine, the blending of religion and sex in certain sects that flourished in Russia in the last century is significant. One widespread sect was "The Christs." Asceticism was the first principle. The flesh had to be subdued by flagellation, but as all experts and many others know, flagellation stimulates the sex-urge that it is supposed to chasten. In white robes the elect—there were congregations in Moscow—would have long services including flogging and sacred dances, then they would tear off their robes and lie on the floor in promiscuous intercourse until they were tired out. One service into which the Moscow police broke included 100 young women. In some places they chose a handsome and robust woman to be "God's Niece" or the Virgin Mary, and as many as possible lay with her. If she had children they were "Little Jesuses." The Skoptay sect was an offshoot of this and became popular. Perceiving that flagellation stimulated sex they cut off the external organs. Their "Virgin Mary" was first put on a pedestal while they danced round her

and ecstatically kissed her and then they cut off her breasts and ate them (communion). It had the usual consequence. In the end they put out the lights and had an orgy of promiscuity.

THE FACTS ABOUT SOVIET RUSSIA

You might not unjustly describe the old Russia, in which more than 90 percent were members of the Orthodox Church or its sects, as reeking with sex. Had it then been an atheistic country one can imagine the paroxysms of horror and grief that would have filled religious literature. Yet no one ever mentioned the facts, or the additional fact that the government had not, in the last century, the thinnest shade of respect for freedom and democracy. On the contrary, so crudely is this moral apologetic for religion conducted that millions of church-members are under the impression that it is only since a group of atheistic statesmen obtained power that there has been a profound lowering of character. It is amusing enough to see how these folk imagine that one consequence is a loss of respect for democracy, of which there had not been an atom in Russia since the primitive days, but it is still more piquant to reflect how during the first 10 years after the Revolution they lapped up and shuddered over stories of lubricity. One wonders how many of them reflected how strange it is that this supply of stories of vice has ceased though Atheism

has grown, and that the fiercest anti-Reds hesitate to put further warmth into their campaign against "Atheistic Communism" by claiming that the country, which was once so beautiful and virtuous, is now sodden with vice.

The truth, which is easily discovered by any impartial man or woman, is that, however much sexual freedom there may be in Russia today, it is as if the Bolsheviks had drawn a mighty sponge over the face of the country and cleansed it of foulness that lingered from the Middle Ages. It is this comparison that impresses us most. No one will, after reading the last few pages, quarrel with me for using the word "foulness." Prostitution, especially child prostitution, in Russia was a world-scandal, and, whatever social view one may take of sex relations, the freedom in Russia was one-sided and mainly based upon the dominance, largely on the brutality, of the male. The old system of prostitution had been destroyed 10 years or more ago—we shall see in what sense we may still talk of prostitutes there—and a new breed of independent women, mistresses of themselves and their behavior, had appeared. And this great moral regeneration was wrought by those "atheistic Reds" whom the churches of America denounce so eloquently.

Is this regeneration a fact? I have already pointed out that while preachers and clerical writers everywhere claim that vice

is the first and most abundant fruit of Atheism their bitter attacks on Russia are not spiced with legends of orgies. Miss Strong tells how articles of hers on the facts of Russian life were "refused by American editors." "We want *confessions*, and nothing else," they said. It is the violent vitriolic white-hot attack on Russia that sells in America, particularly amongst Catholics. Isn't it singular that almost the only vices they enumerate are the familiar "tyranny" and official cruelty? I have included several of these—the British National Library disdains to store many of the hate-breathing books published in America by hungry White Russians—and that is what I find. Most of them do not mention sex morals. In none that are available to me is the word "morals" included in the index, and I confess that I have been unable to wander through 300 or 400 pages of obvious diatribe in search of an odd paragraph.

Vladimir Lazarevski, in his "Under the Bolshevik Uniform" (1936), has an 80-page chapter on "Bolshevik Action in the Moral Field." It is mostly about the early pressure on religion and there are just five pages on sex life. He begins with a wild, vague, unsupported page about license in the early disordered days, and he admits that as the country settled down there was "a spontaneous and salutary reaction." In his index he refers to p. 249 (on the "White Slave Traffic,") but there is no mention

of it on that page (or any I can find). In fact, it is amusing that the only concrete evidence he gives about sex life is a case of a girl who had an illegitimate baby and she was haunted to suicide for her "shame" by her sister and companions. There are, as a matter of fact, now no "illegitimate" babies in Russia. The unmarried mother has the same status and privileges as the married.

Eugene Lyons, in his "Assignment in Utopia" (1938), is as savage against Russia as any virtuous person could desire but he hardly mentions sex. I fell with joy upon a chapter with the title "Upon Sodom and Gomorrah Brimstone and Fire," but it was about the usual lack of respect for freedom and democracy; which is not generally counted one of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. The chapter ignores sex life. In an earlier chapter there is a page about the freedom with which Moscow girls entered into liaisons with resident Americans. In his zeal he gets confused as to whether they were all agents of the secret police, worming out secrets, or were just gold-diggers. And he spoils the whole effect by saying that many of them fell in love with and married the Americans; and that when he met many of them later in America he found that they were "usually" disgusted with it and pined to get back to Soviet Russia (which he had described them as pining to escape from).

Let us admit at once there was a good

deal of confusion in the early years. Even a religious person who is accustomed to think of miracles will not expect that in 1918 the atheistic high-priests just waved their wands over the appalling corruption I have described and forthwith the desert bloomed like a rose-garden. Better informed folk knew that the country at once entered upon a period of such fearful suffering and strain—two years of war against the White Invasion, two years of famine and pestilence, and then the decline and death of Lenin—that the Bolshevik leaders, burdened with colossal problems of reconstruction, could hardly give attention to sexual ethics.

The most highly colored legend of this period is that of the nationalization of women. Communists often denounce these as a sheer fabrication and, as Miss Strong shows, the priests and the Kulaks did use the story in the villages to stir the women and girls to rebellion. But Sorge shows in his "History of Prostitution" that it was actually proposed in a few places. At Kronstad (naval port) the Soviet of Sailors, Workers and Peasants passed a decree abolishing the "private ownership of women." It was a hole-and-corner business with no practical results. The main idea of it was that in the old order the rich bourgeois had had the pick of the girls, and the only way to give the poor sailors and workers a square deal was to abolish marriage. But

the idea that the men would then scramble and fight for the girls is quite wrong. Sorge gives the series of solemn clauses of a similar decree passed at Saratov. Private ownership of females aged between 17 and 32 was abolished. All women with less than five children were to be communal property. The authorities were to keep a register of them, pay them a good monthly wage and a retiring pension if their health broke down, and release them from duties three months before and after childbirth. They were assigned free to factory workers, and other men must pay 100 rubles a month to the civic fund. But writers who refer to this absurd proposal do not mention that it was just a decree of the local Anarchist Club! Lenin denounced the scheme of Communizing women, and both sexes were soon so absorbed in the heavy tasks of the state that they had no time to dally with these dreams. Every mature girl and woman in the U.S.S.R. had a tough job to do.

It is not puritanism in the leaders but the social and economic development that brought about a change in sex attitude. The pro-Russian Dean of Canterbury and some others excuse themselves from discussing the sex question on the ground that Russians do not make the same fuss about sex as Britons and Americans do. Other friendly writers and many Russians say that the great task of building up—not rebuilding—the Bolshevik state is so exacting and

sorbing, that their sex energy is, in modern language, sublimated. Most of us feel rather skeptical about these explanations, and it is straighter psychology to point out that the greatest factor in the revolution was the change in the status of women. From slaves or toys of the men they have been raised to a complete social and economic equality, and for that the entire credit goes to the Bolshevik leaders. "The inequality of women is abolished," Lenin decreed; and that did more for "chastity" than the combined churches of any country could—if they ever attempted it—do in 50 years.

The tragedies that have been thrust upon Russia since it became a Socialist state—it is curious how folk forget that its title is the Union of Soviet *Socialist* Republics—have, it is true, imposed upon the whole of the people unusually heavy labors and sacrifices, and these of themselves would tend to correct practices of the easy-going Tsarist regime. But the effect from our present angle would have been less if woman had not been raised to an equality with men. It is a moot question to what extent economic pressure generally explains prostitution, and it has unquestionably been exaggerated as a factor. But in the old Russia it was important, particularly in the case of child-prostitutes who were driven by poor parents; and in the early years after the Revolution the reduction of large numbers of middle and upper class women,

untrained for any sort of job, to poverty led to a lot of prostitution. I saw it amongst the Russian refugees in the Balkans in 1924. But the complete national planning which began in 1928—the U.S.S.R. has risen from zero to its great height since that date, less than 20 years ago, in spite of the appalling devastation of the recent war—has abolished unemployment. Child prostitution would now be impossible, if one could conceive this new atheistic Russia tolerating it, in view of the vast and all-embracing scheme of education. Then there is a job for every girl and woman, on the ideal terms of equal pay for equal work and with every trade and profession thrown open to both sexes. As a Russian girl said to Miss Goldie, who asked her about the abolition of prostitution: "We Soviet women are no longer drinking fountains for man's convenience, and our men do not expect that we should be."

There are disputable and disputed aspects of social life. While, for instance, some Russians turn up in rich America shrieking, "I escaped" (which pays well with editors and publishers who "want confessions only"), large numbers of impartial visitors and foreign residents assure us that the overwhelming majority of the people warmly support the political regime and its leaders, and the known facts seem to confirm this. Folk generally forget that one half the adult population are women, and no state in the world has done as much for women as the

Bolsheviks have done. With that I am not here concerned. The educational system, the full economic absorption of both sexes, and the social and economic equality of women are facts too plainly established to be challenged. And, in harmony with the Russian doctrine of economic determinism, these things have profoundly changed the moral face of Russia. The best way to ascertain this is, as I have suggested, to compare the verdicts on this point of all the writers, of every school, on Russia since about 1930. Many of the most notorious of the anti-Russian books published in America are, as I said, not available to me, but if they resemble those I have quoted they are chiefly significant for the way in which (except for the earliest years) they avoid this subject or fail to find lucid "evidence" for their readers. Of the remainder the great majority do not glance at the question of sex morals, and those that do discuss the point are substantially agreed.

I find the work of Mr. Pat Sloan ("Russia Without Illusions," 1939) one of the most reliable and most informing. He is a graduate of Cambridge University who went to teach languages in Moscow (1931-2, with long visits later), lived amongst the pupils and people, and does not conceal defects, though he became strongly pro-Russian. For instance, he tells how he was embarrassed by the toilet arrangements when he was lodged in the chief Moscow college of

languages. A common lavatory for both sexes on the floor on which he lived contained five wash-basins on one side and five toilets, without any screening or partition, facing them. When one of the girls wanted to use these she bolted the door, which closed the entire room to others, and one saw young men hammering on it while the lady from her comfortable seat sang out, "Won't be long." They did not regard this as an emergency arrangement but as normal enough, and it had not the consequences it might have in America or Britain. Incidentally Sloan corrects (as others do) the jibe in the British Trade Unionist Sir Walter Citrine's book that he never found a stopper to a washbasin in Moscow. It is really due to cleanliness. Apart from their hot baths they do not care to wash in stagnant water. Sloan also confesses to quite a lot of quarrelling, lying, and cheating (chiefly in the scramble for rooms). On that point again, however, he gives an explanation which discounts much of the criticism. They do not care to occupy one room each but prefer to live two or three friends in a room.

He found complete "equality and comradeship" of the sexes both amongst pupils and teachers, but, he says, "I never saw any familiarity that could be frowned on even by a puritan observer." He rejects entirely the common charge that family life in Russia is destroyed. The state, as most of us know, takes remarkable care of the chil-

dren. In Moscow, he says, you never see bunches of dirty ill-clad children playing in the streets or in bleak backyards. As to the ease of divorce, the state starts from the assumption that marriage is a union based on mutual affection, but when it found that too easy divorce led to unfortunate results it checked the selfish who would flit from flower to flower. It quadrupled the fee for a third and later divorces, and it secures that the father still bears his share of the cost of maintenance of his children. It is the same with children born outside marriage. They are not illegitimate, and the mother has no disabilities but the same pay, without work, two months before and two after childbirth. If the paternity cannot be fixed the girl's known lovers must share the cost of maintenance between them. Sartoris and Bently tell us that a man gets three years in prison if he infects a woman with venereal disease.

Sloan makes two points which dispose readers to trust his statements. He says, like all others, that the vile old system of prostitutes has gone, but not that there is no prostitution in the cities. While he has never been accosted in the streets at night he knows that there *are* prostitutes. The figure of 400 is given as an uncertain estimate while in Tsarist Moscow there were at least 20,000 to half the present population. As an illustration of the system he tells us that he was rung up one night and on pressing for the identity of his caller was

told "a Russian lady who speaks English," and he rang off. There is, of course, prostitution, but Russia has the finest system of reclamation in the world, acting on the women by classrooms and workshops rather than sermons. The French writers Sartoris and Bently tell us that of 2,305 prostitutes who passed through the Home at Leningrad 17 percent went on to the universities or to medical colleges.

On the question how much love-making goes on in Russia outside marriage today, which particularly concerns us here, he guardedly concludes:

> "I very much doubt if the younger generation of the U.S.S.R. is any more promiscuous than the younger generation in Britain."

He reminds us that Russian periodicals do not carry the semi-nude and provocative advertisements that bring so much profit to American periodicals, and the cinema and theater do not put on leg-shows for prurient purposes. One feels, in fact, that Sloan remains deliberately below the truth when he says that there is "not more" unmarried love in Russia. Most of the few writers who glance at the matter and are neither Communist nor anti-Reds say this. Dr. and Mrs. F. F. Timbres ("We Didn't Ask Utopia," 1939) who worked medically for some years in Russia, described the people as "puritanical," but while being Quakers, they are extremely conscientious, we may feel that

their eyes were not searching in this respect. The South African writer, Miss Fay K. Goldie ("Red Reflections," 1938), has two useful chapters on the subject and agrees that the Russians are too hard-working or too absorbed in ideals to be sexy. Most writers, even on social life, give us no information on this point but there is one other writer, Mrs. B. Moore-Pataleena who inspires confidence by her candor ("I am a Woman from Soviet Russia," 1943). She is the daughter of a prosperous physician of Tsarist days who became a Communist and the crack motor-cycle rider of her country. She admits grave defects but on the sex side is possibly too idealistic, though otherwise a good witness. "Society," she says, "is much cleaner in Russia than in the West, and it is going to be cleaner still." She traveled all over Europe and was astonished at the fuss about sex. "In contrast," she says, "the free women of Russia stood out in my eyes like a symbol," or to quote her full verdict:

> "By sheer contrast the picture of the youth of my country stands clear in my vision; it is of a healthy, natural companionship, comradeship, friendship—perhaps romance. I deliberately put the words in that order because Soviet youth finds romance mostly as a result of the first three. The sexual and emotional energies find their expression and outlet in so many indirect ways, such as

social work, exuberant sport activities, various trainings that absorb all one's attention and much of one's time and other channels of human activities of the mass of youth there. Which leaves just a normal amount of biological urge to function . . . Woman is equal to man, intellectually, socially, and economically, and often even in physical strength and endurance . . . In Russia I felt I was a fully-fledged human being while in the West I was only a woman."

The weightiest authorities on Russia, Sidney and Beatrice Webb ("Soviet Communism," last edition 1944) and the most objective and best informed American observer, Mr. Walter Duranty ("I Write as I Please," 1935), confirm that this is the general attitude in the Communist Party (which owes it to Lenin) and over a wide area of Russia beyond the party. Duranty says that they "have little sense of what is known as sexual morality, perhaps for the excellent reason that they feel that sex has little, if anything, to do with ethics." In 14 years he never saw in public anything that any puritan would censure; in 20 years he never saw a drunken woman (though hundreds of drunken men). The Webbs say that "there is less public sex appeal of any sort in the cities of the U.S.S.R. than in those of any other country." The young never "spoon" or "neck" in public. Lenin (who, we must remember, was aging and ailing when he

got power) rejected the idea that the sex act is as harmless as "drinking a glass of water," but he set up no virtue of chastity and refused to attempt to make folk moral, as we say, by Act of Congress. When the Russian jurists came to form a code, they, after long deliberation and keen inquiries, found that incest, though undesirable, is not a crime to be punished by law; and, as I said, the law does not permit any disability of the unmarried mother or her child.

It is hardly necessary for me to sum up. Soviet Russia is a Puritan Commonwealth in comparison with Tsarist Russia, but this change has been effected neither on religious nor moral grounds. The ideal of efficiency and devotion to the common good accounts for what some call the bloodlessness of the people. Its influence is particularly enforced by the strong position of independence that girls and women have obtained. It seems to me that when the country is out of danger and in easier economic circumstances the discipline will be relaxed. There is something artificial about the situation today. But it must be noted that I have not been able to quote any specific evidence as to the amount of private unmarried love in Russia today. There is fairly reliable journalistic evidence that large numbers of cohabiting couples are not married and, as Russians are as emotional as other folk, there is probably a healthy amount of casual intercourse. But the broad situation has blown sky-high the

clerical charge against Atheism and Materialism.

The reader who expected me to describe subtle psychological variations in the Russian attitude to sex will be disappointed. I might claim confirmation from the short paragraph on Russia in the Encyclopedia Sexualis. Writing in 1936, Putman does not find that Russian writers indicate any new psychological attitude. He says that Karl Radek has recently predicted "a new eroticism," but it will be remembered that Radek came to a bad end in the same year. The only distinctive feature he can mention (without enlarging upon it) is "the new Soviet Woman." I have fully described her attitude, which is plainly put by Mrs. Pataleena. It is, I belive, to a large extent temporary. Russia is working out the sex problem, but it has been delayed by prolonged and terrible distractions. It is on the right lines. Sex is a private matter, as decent in itself as any other thing in life, but it has social aspects. These, from the force of circumstances, have to the present attracted most attention in Russia. In a more genial age the women of Russia will come nearest to Shelley's lines in "Prometheus":

And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
On the wide earth, past; gentle radiant forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure.

E. HALDEMAN-JULIUS

EDITOR

LITTLE BLUE BOOKS